

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review

Discussion

This year marks the sixth time in the past decade that the U.S. will comprehensively reassess its national security strategy, military forces, modernization plans, and resource adequacy. As we pursue these efforts to streamline and update our defense establishment to meet emerging challenges and incorporate the promises of new technology, it is essential that a focus be maintained on three core questions: What capabilities should our forces possess? What are the strategic and operational settings in which they will be employed? And what are the political purposes they serve?

Despite significant changes and emerging trends in the post-Cold War environment, the fact remains that America is a maritime nation relying on the guaranteed use of the seas for both our economic well-being and the ability to project military power in support of our global interests. To promote and protect these interests, and maintain its position of global leadership, a U.S. military strategy based on the sea power concepts of forward presence and maritime power projection is essential.

These facts mean that naval-Navy and Marine Corps — forces will play an important future role in support of America's foreign policy objectives. Naval expeditionary forces not only provide the nation with highly effective military forces suitable for a wide variety of scenarios, but that are also politically useful across the widest possible range of diplomatic situations. They are powerful instruments of national policy with special strengths stemming from the complementary but distinct capabilities of the Navy and Marine Corps to command the seas and conduct operations ashore. Naval forces enjoy great freedom of movement on the open sea. They can reach a crisis spot without crossing national boundaries, remain unobserved over-the-horizon until needed, and then depart an area as swiftly as they arrived once a solution is reached.



When land-based facilities are unavailable, naval forces can be tailored for specific situations, providing carrier based air power, Marine Air-Ground Task Forces, sea-launched cruise missiles, or special warfare forces as needed. Naval expeditionary forces can conduct and sustain operations from sea bases. These forces also can project power inland further than ever before, which means that an increasingly larger portion of the globe now falls under the potential influence of U.S. naval power. Today, and for the foreseeable future, naval power is essential if the U.S. is to project global military and political influence.

Naval expeditionary forces can dominate a foe in the littoral battlespace and the adjoining airspace thus reducing risks to follow-on forces. Naval expeditionary forces can also establish control of ports and airfields and inland areas to enable the majority of troops, equipment, and supplies to flow ashore. Significantly, naval expeditionary forces can easily reinforce and complement other American and allied forces, providing great unity of effort for land, sea, and air forces. The result is tremendous lethal striking power and an unmatched means to leverage Joint warfare.

Besides serving operational needs, forward deployed naval expeditionary forces also fulfill important diplomatic roles. They are a tangible expression of U.S. political commitment and military strength. The military capabilities of these forces serve to dissuade regional aggressors and maintain regional stability. Friendly powers typically welcome the presence of American naval forces, seeing them as contributing to regional stability. They also remind potential belligerents that the entire military force of the United States can be deployed. By promoting peace through overseas presence and partnership with our friends and our allies, Navy and Marine forces deter threats to stability to preserve the nation's interests.

Marine Corps Position

The Marines Corps believes the QDR will revalidate the unique contributions made by Navy and Marine Corps expeditionary forces to National Defense. Naval expeditionary forces are powerful national security assets that no other nation can match. They will ensure regional stability by promoting peace, protecting vital interests and when necessary project decisive combat power. Within the current and foreseeable international security environment the increasing value of naval expeditionary forces make them the sine qua non of America's engagement capability in the 21st century. To ensure that these forces remain highly ready and modernized for future contingencies the gap between requirements and resources must be closed.